

Environmental Assessment: SNDO Illegal Dumpsite and Trash Removal

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Chapter 1. Introduction

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1.1. Identifying Information:

1.1.1. Title, EA number, and type of project:

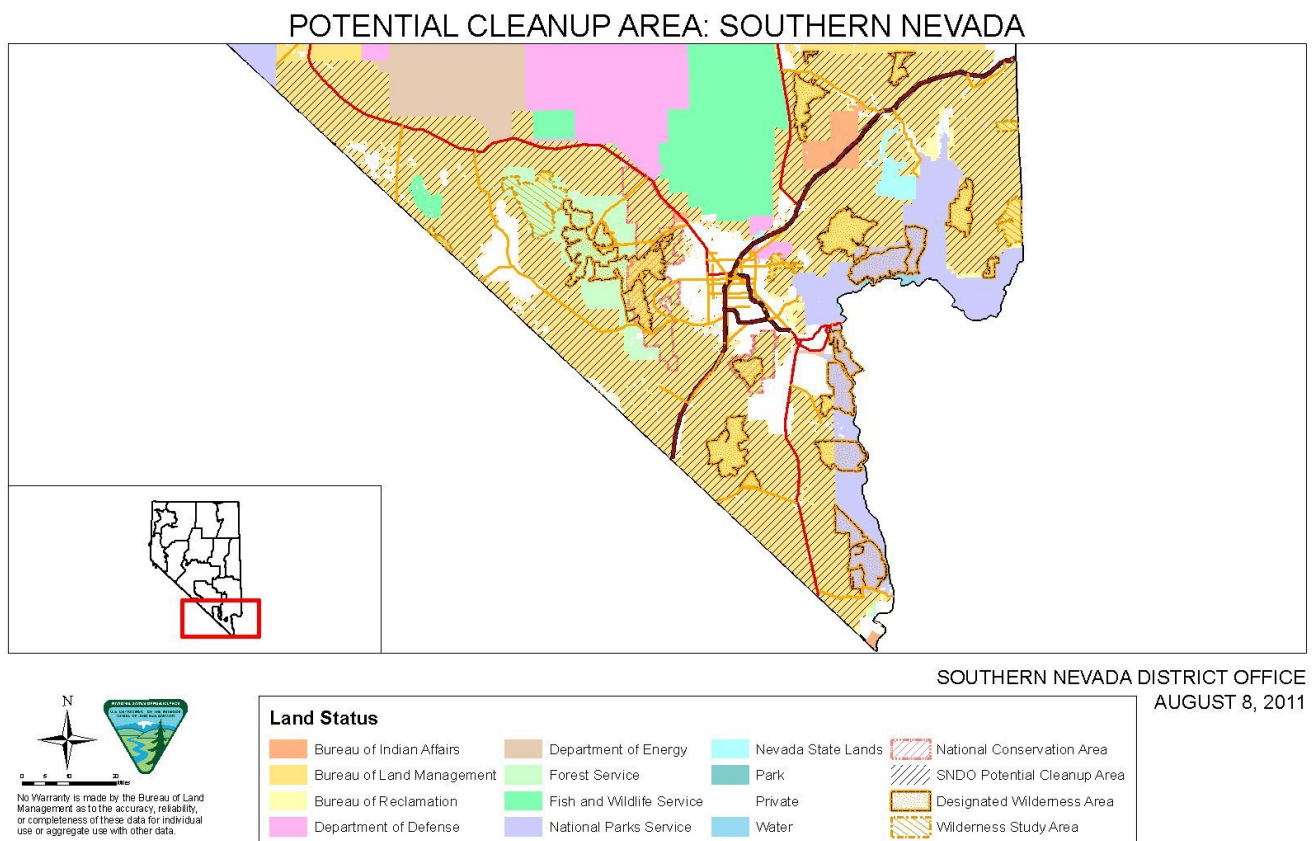
SNDO Illegal Dumpsite and Trash Removal

DOI-BLM-NV-S000-2011-0003-EA

1.1.2. Location of Proposed Action:

The project will take place on BLM managed public lands throughout Southern Nevada.

1.1.2.1. Map of Proposed Action Area



1.1.3. Name and Location of Preparing Office:

Lead Office - Las Vegas Field Office — LLNVS01000

1.1.4. Applicant Name:

Bureau of Land Management

1.2. Purpose and Need for Action:

The purpose of this project is for the BLM to use organized groups and heavy equipment to remove illegally dumped materials from public lands throughout Southern Nevada. Illegal dumping is a public health and safety issue. The BLM is aware of numerous sites throughout the valley; however the potential exists for all land to be dumped on illegally.

The need for this project is to comply with the BLM Las Vegas RMP section VG-2-a as well as AR-1 and its requirement to comply with local, state, and federal air quality regulations. Clark County Air Quality Regulations Section 90 requires measures be taken to limit the disturbance on vacant lands due to illegal dumping.

1.3. Scoping, Public Involvement and Issues:

Internal Scoping:

This proposal has been reviewed by Bureau of Land Management resource team members. Their comments and evaluations are included in this environmental assessment.

Chapter 2. Proposed Action and Alternatives

2.1. Description of the Proposed Action:

Over the past 20 years, Las Vegas and the surrounding areas have experienced unchecked growth unimagined by planners. One of the results of this unprecedented growth was the increase in illegally dumped trash throughout Southern Nevada. Illegally dumped materials include all materials illegally dumped on public lands. Materials can include household garbage, landscape waste, and construction debris. Complaints about illegally dumped materials come from the public, Clark County departments, the Southern Nevada Health District, and other agencies.

The BLM proposes to remove illegally dumped trash and debris from public lands throughout the Southern Nevada District Office using means appropriate for the nature of waste found on respective sites. The means by which the BLM proposes to remove illegally dumped waste from public lands will differ depending on the type of waste and level of disturbance. The project would not only account for lands the BLM currently has record of, but also land that may be identified in the future. The project would take place on land disturbed by illegal dumping.

Areas excluded from the project area include Designated Wilderness Areas. Further NEPA analysis will be required for cleanup actions in Wilderness Areas.

Organized Group Cleanups:

Illegal dumpsites throughout Southern Nevada vary in size and scope. Sites usually contain concentrations of household garbage and other trash such as discarded tires, carpet, televisions, boats, etc. Much of this type of trash can be removed by hand and hand tools. Often, heavy equipment is unsuitable to remove such debris. However, a concerted cleanup effort performed by a group of people is effective.

Under the proposed action, the BLM would use organized groups to remove trash and debris from public lands. Trash will be removed by hand and transported via pickup trucks, stakebed trucks, or OHVs on existing roads to roll-off dumpsters or transfer stations. The number of volunteers will vary depending on the location and size of the area to be cleaned up, but can range from 10 to 300 people. The number of volunteers will be appropriate for the size of the area to be cleaned. Staging areas for organized cleanup events will be on disturbed areas and existing roads and rights-of-way. No new disturbance will result from organized group cleanups.

Under the proposed action, groups will receive an educational and safety briefing before each event. Educational information will include information about sensitive species and issues depending on the cleanup area.

Cleanups Using Heavy Equipment:

Many areas have received illegal dumping in the form of large dirt piles left by construction company equipment. In fact, nearly half of the complaints the BLM has received to date in regards to illegal dumping are about large debris piles. These piles contain mostly gravel and fill dirt, but can also contain large concrete blocks and other construction remnants. In some cases, large amounts of trash have been dumped over a number of years creating very large amounts of garbage. The removal of these piles would do much to break the cycle of “attractive nuisance” dumping and discourage further illegal dumping. Removing large debris piles would also allow for restoration projects to take place where once impossible. The only feasible means to remove these piles from public lands is through the use of heavy equipment. Heavy equipment includes

skid steer tractors, front loaders, backhoes, bull dozers, and any other type of equipment that can move large amounts of debris.

Under the proposed action the BLM will use heavy equipment to remove illegally dumped materials unsafe or unable to be removed by hand or hand tools. No new disturbance would be created by the use of heavy equipment. Equipment will remain on previously disturbed areas, existing roads and rights-of-way. Depending on the materials on site and the need, materials will be removed from the sites via roll-off dumpsters or will be used to create berms. Heavy equipment will not be used within ACECs or desert tortoise habitat during the desert tortoise active season (March 1 through October 31). Motorized equipment will not be used in Wilderness or Wilderness Study Areas.

Disturbed Areas:

Disturbed areas are those on which the vegetation, soil, or hydrology has been significantly altered by repeated vehicle use and illegal dumping. Disturbed areas contain significantly compacted soils and vegetation has been denuded or completely covered with refuse.

Staging and Parking

Staging areas are required for parking and gathering points for cleanup efforts. Under the proposed action, staging areas will be organized on disturbed areas near cleanup sites. Areas will be chosen for ease of access to cleanup areas and high levels of disturbance from previous activities. No new disturbance will result from event staging.

Roll-off Dumpsters:

Roll-off dumpsters are large metal containers used by waste companies to remove solid waste from an area. These dumpsters have a range of sizes and functions and would be chosen for particular use based on the amount and type of debris to be removed.

Under the proposed action, roll-off dumpsters would be placed in areas already disturbed along existing roads and rights-of-way. No new disturbance would result from the roll-off dumpsters to the sites. Roll-off dumpsters would only be on site for the duration of a cleanup event or until such time is necessary for them to be placed and removed, which is usually no longer than a week.

Berms:

Berms are earthen barriers that act as an effective deterrent to illegal dumping.

Under the proposed action, berms will be created using heavy equipment and materials (dirt, rocks, and gravel) that have been illegally dumped. Berming will not create any new disturbance as it will take place on previously disturbed areas and only when prudent. Added benefits to berming are the reduced costs involved in removing materials from dump sites, reduced costs in erecting barriers, and eliminated costs for dumping in landfills and transfer stations. Any non-dirt/rock garbage found in material piles will be removed prior to berming. Berms will not be built in or around flood plains, ephemeral waterways, or riparian areas.

Water and Dust:

Heavy equipment use often requires the use of water to minimize the release of fugitive dust.

Under the proposed project, portable water tanks or water trucks would be on site for dust mitigation purposes and dust permits would be acquired before projects as necessary and advisable.

Timeline:

Under the proposed project, cleanup events would be held on an as-needed basis at any time of year. The availability of organized groups is not reliable and requests for groups to participate in cleanup events often occur with little notice. This is also true of heavy equipment and their operators.

Design Features of Proposed Action:

Prior to cleanup events, appropriate BLM specialists will be consulted informally as to the sensitivity of respective cleanup sites in regards to cleanups. This will be especially true in Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, areas of possible cultural importance, and other sensitive areas. Record of this consultation will be added to the administrative record.

All vehicles, equipment, and personal gear will be clean and free of vegetation and soil before arrival on site and upon leaving the work site.

If hazardous wastes are encountered during cleanup events, reasonable precautions will be taken to ensure the safety of people involved in cleanup efforts. If hazardous waste is identifiable, guidelines outlined in the Emergency Response Guidebook will be followed. In each instance of the discovery of potential hazardous waste, the Hazardous Waste Specialist will be notified.

Compliance with the special stipulations below will help to ensure that desert tortoises are not affected.

- A speed limit of 25 miles per hour shall be required for all vehicles travelling on existing roads.
- Should a desert tortoise enter the area of activity, all activity shall cease until such time as the animal has left the area of its own accord.
- Workers will be instructed to check underneath all vehicles and equipment before moving them as tortoises often take cover underneath parked vehicles.

There should be no impacts to the wild horses and burros, however the potential does exist for individuals to encounter wild horses and burros. Individuals will be instructed to not harass (feed, pet, chase, etc.) wild horses and burros if encountered in or near the clean up areas. If they do see any wild horses and burros, they should keep a safe distance, they are wild animals and can be unpredictable, especially during foaling and breeding season (generally March-May).

Workers and volunteers will be instructed not to harass (feed, pet, chase, etc.) any livestock encountered in or near cleanup areas. A safe distance will be kept as these animals can be unpredictable.

Procedures for Consultation with Specialists:

It is impossible to identify every dump site within the Southern Nevada District. The BLM has identified over 200 illegal dump sites through complaints from various sources and sites come to the attention of the BLM on a weekly basis. For identified sites and sites to be identified in the future, consultation with appropriate BLM resource specialists will be necessary prior to

cleanup events . As long as cleanups are performed in the manner described above, the following form will be used to consult with specialists regarding potential resource issues. The form will contain information pertaining to the type of cleanup, a map of the area to be cleaned up and photos to allow for better assessment by specialists. The completed form will be added to the administrative record.

Figure 2.1. BLM Specialist Consultation Form for Desert Cleanups

BLM SPECIALIST CONSULTATION FORM FOR DESERT CLEANUPS
as approved in NEPA document DOI-BLM-NV-S000-2011-0003-EA

Cleanup Description:

Attach photos of staging areas, trash on site, etc.

Location Description (Legal):

Deter- min- ation	Resource	Rationale	Signature	Date

NP = not present in the area impacted by the proposed action

NI = present, but not affected to a degree that detailed analysis is required

PI = present with potential for relevant impacts that need to be analyzed in detail

The BLM manages lands differently based on the resources, sensitive species, and other factors. National Conservation Areas, Wilderness Study Areas, Areas of Environmental Concern, BLM lands within the SNPLMA disposal boundary, and open lands outside any of these parameters have potentially different issues in regards to cleanup efforts.

Once a cleanup site has been identified, specialists will be consulted as follows based on the type of management of the area:

Sites Within the SNPLMA Disposal Boundary

- Specialists need not be consulted if project description details are followed, the cleanup involves less than 50 people, and no heavy equipment is used.

Sites in Areas of Critical Environmental Concern

- Wildlife Biologist
- Cultural Resource Specialist

Sites in National Conservation Areas

- Wildlife Biologist
- Cultural Resource Specialist
- Outdoor Recreation Planner

Sites in Wilderness Study Areas

- Wildlife Biologist
- Cultural Resource Specialist
- Wilderness Planner

Sites in Floodplains/Wetlands/Riparian Areas

- Wildlife Biologist
- Cultural Specialist
- Hydrologist

Sites on Lands Not Under Special Designation

- Wildlife Biologist (Consultation not required if cleanup involves less than 20 people and no heavy equipment is used)
- Cultural Resource Specialist

2.2. Description of Alternatives Analyzed in Detail:

Under the No Action Alternative, the current method of analysis and cleanup would continue on a site-specific and as-needed basis.

2.3. Alternatives Considered but not Analyzed in Detail

No other alternatives were considered.

2.4. Conformance

The EA is in conformance with the NV Las Vegas Field Office RMP.

Date Approved: October 5, 1998

The proposed action is in conformance with the Las Vegas RMP and complies with the following objectives and management directions:

VG-2-a — Rehabilitate, reclaim, or re-vegetate areas subjected to surface disturbing activities, where feasible. When rehabilitation disturbed areas, manage for optimum species diversity by seeding native species, except where non-native species are appropriate.

AR-1-b — Permit only those activities on BLM-administered lands that are consistent with Federal, State, and local air quality standards and regulations. Require that all appropriate air quality permits are obtained before BLM approval of an action is granted. Where applicable, demonstrate how proposed management actions comply with local, state, tribal and Federal air quality laws, regulations and standards.

Clark County Air Quality Regulations Section 90— Fugitive Dust from Open Areas and Vacant Lots — If open areas and vacant lots are 5,000 square feet or larger and are disturbed by any means, including use by motor vehicles, off-road motor vehicles or material dumping, then the owner/operator of such open areas and vacant lots shall implement one or more of the control measures described in Subsection 90.2.1.1. Subsection 90.2.1.1(a) describes control measures that can include barriers, fences, gates, posts, signs, etc.

Chapter 3. Affected Environment:

Supplemental Authority	Not Present	Present/Not Affected	Present/May be Affected	Rationale
Air Quality		X		
Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)		X		The proposed action to remove trash and debris will have an overall benefit to ACECs and critical habitat
Cultural/Historical	X			
Paleontological Resources		X		
Environmental Justice		X		
Farmlands Prime or Unique	X			
Noxious Weeds/Invasive Non-native Species		X		Removing garden and soil waste will benefit district weed control efforts by reducing source material
Native American Religious Concerns	X			
Floodplains		X		
Riparian/Wetlands		X		
Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Plant Species		X		
Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Animal Species.		X		
Migratory Birds		X		The proposed action to remove trash and debris will have an overall benefit to migratory bird species and their habitat
Waste - Hazardous/Solid	X			
Water Quality		X		
Wild & Scenic Rivers		X		
Wilderness (Study Area)	X			
Forests and Rangelands (HFRA only)		X		The proposed action will have an overall benefit to cactus and yuccas and their habitat
Human Health and Safety		X		

Other resources of the human environment that have been considered for this environmental assessment (EA) are listed in the table below. Elements that may be affected are further described

in the EA. Rationale for those elements that would not be affected by the proposed action and alternative is listed in the table below.

Other Resources	Not Present	Present/Not Affected	Present/May be Affected	Rationale
Grazing Management		X		
Green House Gas Emissions (Climate Change)		X		
Minerals		X		
Paleontological Resources	X			
Socio-Economic Values		X		
Soils/Hydrology		X		
Vegetation		X		
Visual Resources		X		
Recreation		X		
Fuels/Fire Management		X		
Wildlife		X		The proposed action to removed trash and debris will have an overall benefit to wildlife species, including BLM sensitive species and their habitat

Chapter 4. Environmental Effects:

Threatened, Endangered Species

Threatened and endangered species are placed on a federal list by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and receive protection under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA), as amended. The only T&E species known to occur in the vicinity of the project area is the threatened desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*).

In the Mojave region, the desert tortoise occurs primarily on flats and bajadas with soils ranging from sand to sandy-gravel characterized by scattered shrubs and abundant inter-shrub space for herbaceous plant growth. They are also found on rocky terrain and slopes.

As the proposed project area is throughout Southern Nevada, project sites may be situated in desert tortoise habitat ranging from very low to very high density desert tortoise habitat, including ACECs desert tortoise critical habitat. Although all aspects of the proposed action will take place in existing disturbed areas, sites (especially those on the outskirts of the Las Vegas Valley and those outside the Las Vegas SNPLMA Disposal Boundary) may be directly adjacent to large tracts of undisturbed desert tortoise habitat.

Environmental Consequences

Threatened, Endangered Species

The proposed project consist of two different types of actions, (1) organized group clean ups and (2) cleanups using heavy equipment. The following analysis of effects to the desert tortoise will evaluate these actions separately.

Organized Group Cleanups:

As proposed, no new surface or vegetation disturbance will occur, all vehicles will remain within existing roadways and turnouts, equipment, staging areas and participants are restricted to roads and disturbed areas. Organized group cleanup will be executed manually by hand and with hand tools. As proposed, the number of volunteers participating may range from 10-300 people.

As long as cleanups are carried out as described in the proposed action and in conformance with additional stipulations provided below, the proposed action for organized group cleanups that (1) involve fewer than 50 people on a site within the Las Vegas SNPLMA Disposal Boundary and (2) involve fewer than 20 people on a site outside the Las Vegas SNPLMA Disposal Boundary will have no affect determination for the desert tortoise. Through the removal of trash and debris there will be an overall benefit to the desert tortoise and their habitat.

Organized groups cleanups that exceed the limits described above will need to be routed to BLM Wildlife Biologist for review to make a Section 7 determination and to provide any additional stipulations or terms and conditions as determined necessary. As project sites may be adjacent to undisturbed tortoise habitat, there is potential for tortoises to wander into the area of activity and/or take refuge under vehicles and equipment. If not noticed and avoided during activities, desert tortoises could be either injured or killed (by crushing) or harassed (by being moved out of harm's way). The potential for tortoises wandering into the area of activity will depend on the location of the site, the surrounding habitat and the time of year organized group cleanups will be carried out.

Cleanups Using Heavy Equipment:

As proposed, no new surface or vegetation disturbance will occur, all vehicles will remain within existing roadways and turnouts, equipment, staging areas and participants are restricted to roads, and disturbed areas. As project sites may be adjacent to undisturbed tortoise habitat, there is potential for tortoises to wander into the area of activity and/or take refuge under vehicles and equipment. If not noticed and avoided during activities, desert tortoises could be either injured or killed (by crushing) or harassed (by being moved out of harm's way). The potential for tortoises wandering into the area of activity will depend on the location of the site, the surrounding habitat and the time of year cleanups using heavy equipment will occur. The use of water trucks will increase the potential for tortoise wandering into the area of activity. Through the removal of trash and debris there will be an overall benefit to the desert tortoise and their habitat.

Cleanups using heavy equipment should not occur within ACECs or desert tortoise critical habitat during the desert tortoise active season (March 1 through October 31). Any cleanups using heavy equipment will need to be routed to BLM Wildlife Biologist for review to make a Section 7 determination and to provide any additional stipulations or terms and conditions as determined necessary.

Additional special stipulation for Cleanups using heavy equipment:

1. Prior to removal of large dirt piles, project lead is to inspect entire pile for animal burrows, especially larger ones that may be utilized by desert tortoise. If present, photograph and route to BLM Wildlife Biologist for review to make a Section 7 determination and to provide any additional stipulations as needed.

Additional special stipulations for all cleanup activities to adhere to:

1. Participants will be provided educational information on the desert tortoise which includes the legal protection and consequences for the violation of the Endangered Species Act (Desert tortoise fact sheet has been uploaded to project folder in ePlanning).
2. Participants should be encouraged to car pool to cleanup sites, especially when located outside the Las Vegas Valley to reduce the number of vehicles.

Routing Requirements for Wildlife Biologist:

As long as cleanups are carried out as described in the EA and in conformance with additional stipulations provided in this section, consultation with BLM Wildlife Biologist to make a separate Section 7 determination for future cleanups will only be required for the following situations:

- If the site is located within the Las Vegas SNPLMA Disposal Boundary, out of the Las Vegas SNPLMA Disposal Boundary, ACEC, desert tortoise critical habitat or NCAs and the cleanup will utilize heavy equipment
- If the site is located within the Las Vegas SNPLMA Disposal Boundary and the cleanup will have over 50 participants.
- If the site is located outside the Las Vegas SNPLMA Disposal Boundary and the cleanup will have over 20 participants.
- If site includes removal of large dirt piles that have animal burrows (see additional details in stipulation for Cleanups using heavy equipment).

Chapter 5. List of Preparers

Table 5.1. List of Prepares

Name	Title	Responsible for the Following Section(s) of this Document
Eric Delynko	Desert Cleanup Coordinator	
Katie Kleinick	Wildlife Biologist	
Amelia Savage	Wildlife Biologist	
Fred Edwards	Vegetation Specialist	